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Twilight world of g and espiona

THE DEVON CONNECTION/Drugs, Guns, Intrigue - Part 1

When Bulletin reporters Thomas M. Burton and Francis X. Geary started talking about Starlight night scopes, China Lake, Libya, silencers and a group of mercenaries and drug-runners called The Company, it sounded like they were working on a spy novel. But the contents of a sealed federal indictment disclosed to The Bulletin indicates what they uncovered during their two-month investigation is all too real. This is the first of three reports.

Phila. raid opens bizarre spy case

By THOMAS M. BURTON and
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Of The Bulletin Staff

Bradley F. Bryant strode into Terminal E at Philadelphia International Airport and walked up to the Delta Airlines ticket counter, seemingly unaware of eyes that watched his every move.

Big (6-3, 210 pounds), bearded and ruggedly handsome, Bryant, 36, checked his luggage through to Atlanta. His name, he told the ticket agent, was "Pierce."

When Bryant turned away from the counter, Philadelphia police officers seized him. Simultaneously, other officers swooped down on Suite 608-610 of the Sheraton Airport Inn and detained Larry Earl Bryant, Bradley's cousin, and Roger Barnard.

It was the night of Friday, Jan. 4, 1980, and the city

was draped in a mantle of snow. The police retrieved Bryant's luggage from the airline, confiscated the suitcases found in the suite and began what they thought was a routine investigation into drug smuggling.

But they found no drugs in the baggage.

What they did find was a miniature arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, some of them threaded to receive silencers, plus sophisticated electronic coding equipment.

A midwinter drug bust had turned into a spy saga.

Inadvertently, Philadelphia narcotics investigators had lifted the lid on a twilight world of international intrigue, gun-running and espionage.

The lid still has not been removed, but it has been raised high enough to provide glimpses of a netherworld in which men move freely from one side of the law to the other, traveling from Las Vegas to Libya to Colombia,

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